



Five S's of Prayer

Lionel Hartley

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Second Edition – Expanded and revised

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Introduction to the Second Edition

Strangely, *The S's of Prayer* originally began as a list of about a dozen words beginning with the letter 'S' to aid in the memorisation of a few important aspects of prayer. But like many projects that I undertake, I find it difficult knowing when to stop.

A limited edition of *The S's of Prayer* was first published in 1998 with forty words which began with the letter "S" and was so well received (except by a certain unnamed stutterer) that I chose to revise and expand it. When I reached over two hundred and seventy 'S' words, I figured that I ought to stop before the exercise became ridiculous and we lost the original concept — and that is to learn that *prayer is God's chosen medium for the development of our personal relationship with Him*.

I hope this list challenges you, teaches you, and maybe even makes you smile.

Lionel Hartley, 2001

This edition dedicated to Rosemary Hartley.

Prayer should be:

1. **Simple and Straightforward** — talk to the Lord as you would talk to your family.

You don't have to be a Sage, Saint, Scholar, Seer, Seminar-ian, Senator, Sergeant, Servant, Sheriff, Singer, Skateboarder, Sketcher, Skier, Slave, Socialite, Spaniard, Spouse, Sprinter, Stentor, Steward, Stockbroker, Storekeeper, Storyteller, Surgeon, Surveyor, Swagman, or even Sagacious, Skilful, Spiritual, Sporty, Spotless, Sprightly, Spruced-up, Sthenic, or Studious.

Luke 11:9, 10 And I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. / For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.

Matthew 6:9 Your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him.

Prayer should be:

2. **Spontaneous and Sapid** (interesting).

John 15:4, 5, 7 Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. / I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing. /.../ If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it

shall be done unto you.

We can pray prepared prayers or pray in conversation. Matthew 6:7, 8 But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking. / Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him.

Prayer can also be:

3. Scheduled or Systematic.

Acts 3:1 Now Peter and John went up together into the temple at the hour of prayer, being the ninth hour.

Daniel 6:10 Daniel ... went into his house; and his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees *three times a day*, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime (emphasis mine).

In my book *The Practice of Prayer* (1987)* I listed the following times of prayer as recorded in the Bible: Three times a day — Daniel 6:10, Evening, Morning and Noonday — Psalm 55:7, Seven times a day — Psalm 119:164, Morning — Mark 1:35, At the Morning Watch — Psalm 63:6, At the Third Hour (of the day) — Acts 2:15, At the Sixth Hour (of the day) — Acts 10:9, At the Third Hour (of the day, the Hour of Prayer) — Acts 3:1, At eventide — Genesis 24:63, At night — Psalm 134:1, and At midnight — Psalm 119:62. Although early seekers make certain finders, I guess the moral is summed up in the following references: At all times — Ephesians 6:18, Always — Luke 18:1 and Without ceasing — I Thessalonians 5:17, I Samuel 12:23

(*Now reprinted as *A Prayer Resource Manual* — available from this publisher)

Prayer should be:

4. Slow and contemplative — Be slow to speak and quick to hear.

Ecclesiastes 5:2, 3, 6, 7a Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter any thing before God: for God is in heaven, and thou upon earth: therefore let thy words be few. / For a dream cometh through the multitude of business; and a fool's voice is known by multitude of words. /.../ Suffer not thy mouth to cause thy flesh to sin; neither say thou before the angel, that it was an error: wherefore should God be angry at thy voice, and destroy the work of thine hands? / For in the multitude of dreams and many words there are also divers vanities...

Prayer should be:

5. Spoken, Silent (*A single grateful thought toward heaven is the most perfect prayer. — Lessing.*), **Seen or Secret** (*Secret prayer is not a monologue, but a dialogue — John K Mott.*)

Matthew 6:5, 6 And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. / But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.

Prayer should be:

7. Smile-filled, yet Serious and Sacred.

a) We need to be serious in our willingness to forgive others. Matthew 6: 12, 14, 15 And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors./.../ For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: / But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

b) We need to be serious about praying, as the greatest tragedy in regard to prayer is not *unanswered* prayer, but *unoffered* prayer.

c) We also need to be serious about our motives. Jeremiah 29:12, 13 Then shall ye call upon me, and ye shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you. / And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart.

Prayer should be:

8. Seeking and Searching — to know God's will for our lives.

Philippians 4:6, 7 Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. / And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. (See also my book, *How do I Know God's Will for my Life?*)

Prayer should be:

9. **Surrendered and Sacrificial**- willing to accept God's will.

Matthew 26:39 And he went a little farther, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt (See also Vs 42 & 44).

[God answers prayers *Sunnum Bonum* (Latin — What is for our best good)]

Prayer should be:

10. **Strong, Sincere & in faith**, because prayer is **Sanative and Sanctifying**.

Archbishop Joseph Bernardin (*Leadership*, Vol 3 #2) said, If we are honest, we must admit that much of our time is spent pretending. But when we turn to God in prayer, we must present our real selves, candidly acknowledging our strengths and weaknesses and our total dependence on him.

Jeremiah 29:11-14a For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the LORD, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end. / Then shall ye call upon me, and ye shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you. / And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart. / And I will be found of you, saith the LORD: and I will turn away your captivity, and I will gather you from all the nations.

2 Chronicles 7:14 If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.

Faith: James 1:5-7 If any of you lack wisdom, *let him ask of God*, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. / But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. / For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord (emphasis mine).

*Faith is the key to answered prayer,
And though faith's small indeed,
A mountain can be moved by faith
Small as a mustard seed!
If you believe with all your heart,
What you believe will be;
And all your prayers will be answered
When true faith is the key. (Anon.)*

Prayer should be:

11. Selfless, Sensible and Sane.

James 4:3, 7, 8 Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts. / Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. / Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded.

Prayer should be:

12. **Sedulous** and **Steadfast** — patiently persevere with God.

In the previous quote we saw the folly of asking selfishly. The verse immediately before it (James 4:2) shows the folly of not even bothering to ask: Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not.

We need to persevere with God as He answers prayer with a *Yes*, a *No* or a *Not Yet* and the *Not Yet* is in His time — Isaiah 49:8 Thus saith the LORD, *In an acceptable time* have I heard thee, and in a day of salvation have I helped thee: and I will preserve thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, to establish the earth, to cause to inherit the desolate heritages.

This is illustrated in the story in Luke 18:1-8a And he spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint; / Saying, There was in a city a judge, which feared not God, neither regarded man: / And there was a widow in that city; and she came unto him, saying, Avenge me of mine adversary. / And he would not for a while: but afterward he said within himself, Though I fear not God, nor regard man; / Yet because this widow troubleth me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me. / And the Lord said, Hear what the unjust judge saith. / And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them? / I tell you that he will avenge them speedily.

We need also to be patient — Psalm 37:7-9 Rest in the LORD, and wait patiently for him: fret not thyself because of him who prospereth in his way, because of the man who bringeth wicked devices to pass. / Cease from anger, and forsake wrath: fret not thyself in any wise to do evil. / For evildoers shall be cut off: but those that wait upon the LORD, they shall inherit the earth.

Prayer should be:

13. Scriptural.

2 Timothy 3:15-17 And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. / All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: / That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works. Proverbs 28:9 He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be abomination.

Prayer should be:

14. Significant and under the Saviour's Signature – prayer needs to be in the Son's name.

John 14:13, 14 And whatsoever ye shall ask *in my name*, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. / If ye shall ask any thing *in my name*, I will do it (emphases mine).

Acts 4:10-12 Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, *that by the name of Jesus Christ* of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by him doth this man stand here before you whole. / This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner. / Neither is there salvation in any other: for *there is none other name under heaven* given among men, whereby we must be saved (emphases mine).

Acts 9:26-29a And when Saul was come to Jerusalem, he assayed to join himself to the disciples: but they were all afraid of him, and believed not that he was a disciple. / But Barnabas took him, and brought him to the apostles, and declared unto them how he had seen the Lord in the way, and that he had spoken to him, and how he had preached boldly at Damascus *in the name of Jesus*. / And he was with them coming in and going out at Jerusalem. / And he spake boldly *in the name of the Lord Jesus*.

Prayer should be:

15. Specific and Shaped to Size.

Luke 12:11, 12 12:11 ... take ye no thought how or what thing ye shall answer, or what ye shall say: / For the Holy Ghost shall

teach you in the

Prayer should be:

16. Spirit controlled and Sacrosanct.

Romans 8:4, 5, 14 ... walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. / For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. / For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.

Prayer should be:

17. Sympathetic and Stretched Sideways — pray *for* others.

Corrie Ten Boom said, How little we realise the importance of intercessory prayer. If at this moment you pray for someone else, even though he is on the other side of the globe, the Lord Jesus will touch him.

Matthew 5:44 — 48 Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbor, and hate thine enemy. / But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and *pray for them* which despitefully use you, and persecute you; / That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the

unjust. / For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same? / And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the publicans so? / Be ye therefore perfect (mature), even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect (emphasis and annotation mine).

Job 42:10 And the LORD turned the captivity of Job, *when he prayed for his friends*: also the LORD gave Job twice as much as he had before (emphasis mine).

Prayer should be:

18. **Shared** — pray *with* others.

Heb 10:24, 25 And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: / Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.

Matt 18:19, 20:19 Again I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven. / For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.

Psalms 111:1 ... I will praise the LORD with my whole heart, *in the assembly* of the upright, and *in the congregation*.

Isaiah 56:7 Even them will I bring (together) to my holy moun-

tain, and make them joyful in my *house of prayer*: their burnt offerings and their sacrifices shall be accepted upon mine altar; for mine house shall be called *an house of prayer* for all people (notation and emphases mine).

Prayer should be:

19. Savoured and Sabbatical.

Psalm 37:4, 5 Delight thyself also in the LORD: and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart. / Commit thy way unto the LORD; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass.

Isaiah 58:13, 14 If thou turn away thy foot from the sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day; and call the sabbath a delight, the holy of the LORD, honorable; and shalt honor him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words: / Then shalt thou delight thyself in the LORD; and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it.

Thomas Brooks said, The best and sweetest flowers of paradise God gives to His people when they are upon their knees. Prayer is the gate of heaven.

And finally,

20. God will still accept the prayer that is **Short, Sad, Sub-standard, Scrawled, Scribbled, Scruffy, Sorrowful, Suppli-**

cating, Spooky, Scary, Spine-chilling, Sheepish, Stumbled, Stammered, Stuttered, Screamed, Squealed, Shrieked, Screeched, Shouted, Squawked, Spoken, Sighed, Sentimental, Sequential or Scrambled, Senseless or Sequacious, Sensitive, Scrawny, Stilted, Sudden, Slow, Straggly, Serene, or Struggled.

God listens even if you're Scarred or Scared, Sighted, Spectacled, Staring, Squinting, or Sightless, Shabby or Smart, Short or Stout, Shivering, Shuddering, or Shocked, Staggering, Strolling, Slipping, Sliding, Standing, Supine, Sedentary, Squatting, Squashed, or Seated, Severed, Separated, Solitary, Secluded under Security Surveillance Sentries or Surrounded in Sweaty Starving Squalor, Sick, Suffering, or even if you are sadly scathingly said to be a Strange Shy Strengthless, Shuffling Sleepy Silver-haired Speechless Senile Simpleton or his or her Stilted Sibling.

God will hear the confession of the Swearing Stained Shoplifter, Stealthy Shrewd Sleazy Shyster, Shirking Sponger, Stubborn Stinking Stirrer, Suspected Striking Stalking Stranger Strangler or Suspicious Stealing Sinner, and God will even accept as sincere suitable sensible spoken statements the contrition of a Strutting Streetwise Shamed Stigmatised Scandalised Spicy Spell-binding Sultry Scarlet Slut or a Saucy Sensuous Sexy Stripper.

Romans 8:26-28 Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. / And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession

for the saints according to the will of God. / And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.

But He surely wonders about (*yet may still answer*) the prayer that is **Saccharine, Sacrilegious, Sadistic, Salacious, Sanctimonious, Sanguinary, Sarcastic, Sassy, Satanic, Saucy, Scandalous, Scanty, Scarce, Scathing, Sceptical, Schadenfreude** (maliciously enjoying another's misfortunes), **Schismatic, Scolding, Scowling, Scrappy, Seasonal, Seditious, Seductive, Seething, Segregative, Self-abasing, Self-aggrandising, Self-approbing, Self-centred, Self-conceited, Self-congratulatory, Selfish, Self-opinionated, Sensational, Sensual, Sententious, Serious, Set, Shallow, Shifty, Silly, Skimped, Skiting, Smug, Solemn, Sparse, Spasmodic, Speculative, Sped, Speechified, Spiteful, Stagnant, Staid, Standardised, Static, Stereotyped, Stipulating, Stodgy, Stropky, too Structured, Stubborn, Stultifying, Stupid, Subversive, Suggestive, Sulking, Sullen, Superfluous, Surly, Surmising, Surreptitious, Suspicious, Swanky, or Sycophantic.**

So then, in summary, may your prayers then be **Simple, Straightforward, Spontaneous, Sapid, Scheduled, Systematic, Slow and contemplative, Spoken or Silent, Seen or Secret, Solid, Sin-forsaken, Smile-filled yet Serious, Sacred, Seeking, Searching, Surrendered, Sacrificial, Strong, Sincere, Sanative, Sanctifying, Selfless, Sensible, Sane, Sedulous, Steadfast, Scriptural, Significant, Under His Signature, Specific, Shaped to Size, Spirit controlled,**

**Sacrosanct, Sympathetic, Stretched Sideways, Shared,
Savoured, Sabbatical, and Satisfying.**

